

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01
HA-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /071 W
-----110487 251846Z /45

R 251740Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1353
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 15542

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, BQG
SUBJECT: REQUEST BY SON OF RUDOLF HESS TO VISIT
HIS FATHER UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

REFS: (A) 77 STATE 158133
(B) STATE 175330

1. THE THREE ALLIED AMBASSADORS HAVE RECEIVED WRITTEN REQUESTS FROM THE SON OF RUDOLF HESS THAT HE BE PERMITTED TO VISIT HIS FATHER ALONE AND WITHOUT A TIME LIMIT FOR THE PURPOSE OF GIVING HIS FATHER AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT HIS NAZI PAST. THE SON'S REQUEST IS BASED ON PRESS REPORTS THAT, WHEN FRG PRESIDENT SCHEEL RAISED THE QUESTION OF HESS' RELEASE WITH BREZHNEV, BREZHNEV ANSWERED THAT THE SOVIETS COULD NOT RELEASE A MAN WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NAZI CRIMES OF THE LAST WAR AND WHO HAS SHOWN NO REGRET EVEN UNTIL TODAY. THE SON'S ARGUMENT IS THAT HESS CANNOT REPENT, IN VIEW OF THE RESTRICTED
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TIONS IN SPANDAU, UNLESS HE IS PERMITTED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS HIS ABSOLUTE TRUST.

2. THE REQUEST FOR A MEETING (BUT NOT THE PURPOSE) WAS DISCUSSED IN THE BONN GROUP ON JULY 12 AND AGREEMENT WAS REACHED TO SEND AN INTERIM REPLY WHILE REFERRING THE LETTER TO THE MISSIONS IN BERLIN FOR A RECOMMENDED FINAL

REPLY. THE MISSIONS HAVE RECOMMENDED A REPLY TO BE SENT BY EACH AMBASSADOR WHICH WOULD INFORM THE SON THAT SUCH A MEETING IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY SPANDAU PRISON REGULATIONS BUT THAT THE ALLIED AUTHORITIES IN SPANDAU HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE ALLIED AMBASSADORS TO ASK THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES WHETHER THEY WOULD AUTHORIZE SUCH A VISIT.

3. THE ALLIED BONN GROUP REPS DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT TRIPARTITELY ON AUGUST 24 AND AGREED WITH THE MISSIONS' RECOMMENDATION THAT AN APPROACH TO THE SOVIETS SHOULD BE RECOMMENDED TO CAPITALS. HOWEVER, THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT WE SHOULD NOT INFORM HESS' SON OF THIS APPROACH IN ADVANCE AND THAT THE FINAL LETTER TO THE SON (ASSUMING THE SOVIETS REJECT THE REQUEST) COULD BE DRAFTED IN THE LIGHT OF THE SOVIET RESPONSE. TO INFORM THE SON IN ADVANCE OF OUR INTENTION COULD WELL RESULT IN HIS MAKING THE ALLIED LETTERS PUBLIC BEFORE THE SOVIETS HAD A CHANCE TO RESPOND AND MIGHT COMPLICATE OUR DEALINGS WITH THE SOVIETS ON THIS AND RELATED HESS ISSUES. IT WAS AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO CAPITALS THAT AN APPROACH TO THE SOVIETS BE AUTHORIZED IN PRINCIPLE AND, IF THIS IS APPROVED, TO REQUEST THAT THE MISSIONS PREPARE AGREED TALKING POINTS FOR USE IN BERLIN FOR SUCH AN APPROACH.

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4. IN ANY CASE, THE BRITISH, FOR THEIR PART, DO NOT

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WANT THE REPLY SIGNED AT AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL. WE CAN
RETURN TO THIS IN THE LIGHT OF THE SOVIET RESPONSE.

5. THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT THE BRITISH MADE
A SIMILAR PROPOSAL LAST YEAR (REF A AND PREVIOUS),
WHICH THE DEPARTMENT REJECTED. WE SEE THREE DISTINC-
TIONS BETWEEN THAT PROPOSAL AND THE PRESENT ONE, WHICH
IN TURN LEAD US TO SUPPORT THE PRESENT PROPOSAL. FIRST,
THE PRIOR PROPOSAL WAS BASED ON (UNSPECIFIED) PRIOR
SOVIET STATEMENTS IN DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS WHILE THIS ONE
IS BASED ON PRESS REPORTS OF WHAT BREZHNEV SAID TO
SCHEEL. THE SAME STATEMENT WAS OF COURSE MADE BY THE
SOVIETS IN REPLY TO OUR LATEST DEMARCHE ON HESS (REF B).
WHILE THE BRIEF FRG REPORT WE HAVE OF THE SCHEEL/
BREZHNEV CONVERSATION DOES NOT REFLECT BREZHNEV HAVING
SAID HESS WAS UNREPENTANT, WE CANNOT EXCLUDE THAT HE DID
IN FACT SAY THAT. IN ANY CASE, WE DO NOT HAVE TO RELY
ON DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES FOR THE BASIS OF THE RE-
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QUEST TO THE SOVIETS.

6. THE SECOND DISTINCTION IS THAT THE ALLIES ARE MERELY
PASSING ON A REQUEST BY HESS' SON, THEY ARE NOT TAKING
THE INITIATIVE THEMSELVES. DENIAL OF THE REQUEST WILL
BE LESS SERIOUS THAN IF IT WERE A REQUEST BY THE THREE
ALLIED GOVERNMENTS. FINALLY, WHILE OUR FAILURE TO AGREE
TO THE BRITISH INITIATIVE OF LAST YEAR COULD NOT RESULT
IN UNFAVORABLE PRESS TREATMENT, WE ASSUME THAT HESS'
SON WOULD USE OUR FAILURE TO RAISE THE MATTER WITH THE
SOVIETS TO ALLIED DISADVANTAGE.

7. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHETHER THE SOVIETS WILL AGREE TO
THE SUGGESTION, ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS OF A REQUEST MADE IN BERLIN ON
BEHALF OF UK MINISTER OF STATE JUDD TO VISIT SPANDAU
PRISON (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND THE SOVIETS ARE CONSIDERING)
MAY GIVE SOME INDICATION OF THE LIKELY REACTION.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATION
IN PARAGRAPH 3. MEEHAN

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